UC RIVERSIDE | International Students and Scholars

Post-Completion OPT Application Checklist

Before applying for OPT, please attend an OPT Workshop or review the F-1 OPT guidelines on the ISS OPT Page. If you have any questions, please set up a meeting with an ISS Advisor by emailing internationalstudents@ucr.edu.

APPLICATION WINDOW

- The earliest USCIS can accept your application is 90 days before your program completion date (not graduation date) and no later than 60 days after your program completion date. USCIS will deny applications outside of this application window.
- Students may apply via paper mail or online method; please only choose one method.

OPT APPLICATION STEPS

1. Request an OPT I-20 from the ISS Office. Please gather the following items and email them to internationalstudents@ucr.edu. Please allow 7-10 business days for an ISS Advisor/DSO to review your documents to determine if you are eligible to apply for OPT.

- ☐ OPT Request Form
  - Signed by your Academic Advisor (Undergraduate Students) or Graduate Advisor (Graduate Students)
- ☐ Copy of your most recent Form I-94
- ☐ (If Applicable) Copies of previous CPT I-20, EAD cards, OPT I-20, I-20 with different SEVIS number, or other relevant documents.

2. Pay $100.00 ISS OPT Fee. ISS will review your OPT packet. Once ISS has determined that you are eligible to apply for OPT, ISS will provide you with ISS OPT Fee payment instructions.

3. Receive your OPT I-20 from the ISS Office. Once you have paid the OPT fee and submitted your payment receipt to ISS, an ISS Advisor will email your OPT I-20 to your UCR email. Please print your OPT I-20 and sign it at the bottom. If you would like to meet with an ISS Advisor to review your documents, please reach out to internationalstudents@ucr.edu.

4. Gather Final OPT (I-765) Application Documents to Submit to USCIS. Please be sure to submit your documents to USCIS within the application window and within 30 days of the date that the International Student Advisor entered your OPT recommendation into SEVIS. Here are the steps and documents that USCIS will require:

- ☐ OPT I-20 (MUST BE ISSUED BEFORE THE I-765 IS SUBMITTED TO USCIS)
  - The OPT I-20 must have OPT Recommendation from a DSO on the 2nd page. OPT recommendation is required before the I-765 Application is submitted to USCIS
  - The OPT I-20 must be submitted to USCIS within 30 days of issuance
- ☐ Passport Photo
  - Digital Copy of a U.S. Passport-style photo
- ☐ Government Identification
  - Digital copy of a valid passport or Form I-94

- ☐ Supporting Documents (if applicable): Copies of previous CPT I-20, OPT I-20, EAD card, I-20 with different SEVIS ID number, or others
- ☐ $470 USCIS I-765 Fee (Review USCIS Fee Schedule for any Fee Changes)
  - Credit Card or Electronic Bank Transfer
- ☐ Optional USCIS Premium Processing Fee (Review USCIS Fee Schedule for any Fee Changes)
  - Decisions on OPT applications are made within 30 days of submission.

5. **Filing the I-765 Online**
   - REMINDER: You must first receive the OPT I-20 from the ISS Office
   - Step One: Create a myUSCIS Account (if you don't already have an account)
   - Step Two: Click on 'File a form online' & select 'I-765, Application for Employment Authorization'
   - Step Three: Enter all information, upload required documents, and submit
6. **After Submitting the OPT Application to USCIS**
   - USCIS will issue an OPT Receipt Number that you can see on your myUSCIS account and mail you a paper I-797 Receipt Notice
   - You can track your case through your online USCIS account
   - Within Approximately 3-5 Months: USCIS will make the final OPT decision
     - If USCIS sends you a Request for Evidence (RFE) or a Denial Notice, please make an appointment with an ISS advisor internationalstudents@ucr.edu
     - Please be advised that USCIS is no longer accepting self-submitted photos for OPT and other applications. You should still submit a photo if the directions on the form advise you to do so; however, you should also expect to receive a notice from USCIS directing you to go to a USCIS Application Support Center at an appointed time to have your photo taken. They may also ask for biometrics (fingerprints, etc.).
     - If your OPT is approved, USCIS will deliver your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card to your mailing address.
       - Send scan of EAD Card to ISS internationalstudents@ucr.edu

AFTER OPT APPROVAL

- **Set up Your SEVP OPT Portal**
  - Once you are approved for OPT, you will need to set up your SEVP OPT Portal account. The OPT Portal is an important tool to maintain your F-1 status by reporting your employment and personal information during your OPT period. From the start date of your EAD card, you will receive an OPT Portal link through your UCR email to set up your portal account. If you do not receive this link or it has expired, please contact the ISS Office internationalstudents@ucr.edu to reset the OPT portal link.
  - Once your OPT portal is set up, you must report any changes **within 10 days** of that change.

- **Unemployment Rule**

  USCIS allows 90 days of unemployment time during the 12-month Post-Completion OPT period. Unemployment days are counted from the start date on your EAD card/your approved OPT start date. In order to stop the unemployment clock, please be sure to report your employment information through your OPT Portal account. It

is important to report your OPT Employment before your unemployment time has passed to avoid falling out of F-1 status.

- **International Travel during OPT**

  When traveling internationally during your OPT period, please carry the following items to enter back the U.S. To request for an updated travel signature, please email internationalstudents@ucr.edu.

  - Valid Passport (must be valid for at least 6 months at time of entry to the U.S.)
  - Valid F-1 Visa Stamp (Canadian nationals are exempt)
  - OPT I-20 with Travel Signature (only valid for 6 months)
  - OPT EAD Card
  - Employment Verification Letter or Job Offer Letter

Paper Filing Application | USCIS Instructions

- On April 1, 2024, USCIS raised the fee for the paper filing option to $520 and the online filing option to $470. We recommend using the online application as it is a more cost effective option in addition to providing you the ability to track your application immediately after it's submitted.